AFGHANISTAN: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS JANUARY 1995-FEBRUARY 1997

All the sources of information contained in this document are identified and are publicly available.

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OTTAWA, CANADA

February 1997

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Research completed 5 February 1997

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GLOSSARY

Harakat	Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami (Movement of the Islamic Revolution). Predominantly Pashtun traditionalist and clerical Sunni party. Leader: Muhammad Nabi.
Hizb	Hizb-i Islami (Islamic Party). Predominantly Pashtun radical Islamist party of the intelligentsia. SCC member. Leader: Former Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hikmatyar.
Hizb (Khalis)	Hizb-i Islami (Islamic Party). Splinter group of Hikmatyar's Hizb. Leader: Yunis Khalis.

Ittihad	Ittihad-i Islami (Islamic Alliance). Predominantly Pashtun Islamist party supported by Saudi Arabia. Espouses Wahhabism and is anti-Shi'i. Allied to President Rabbani. Leader: Abdul Rasul Sayyaf.
Jabha	Jabha-yi Nijat-i Milli (National Salvation Front). Traditionalist Sunni party with little foreign support or military presence. SCC member. Leader: Sibghatullah Mujaddadi.
Jamiat	Jamiat-i Islami (Islamic Society). Predominantly Tajik (Sunni) Islamist party. Leaders: President Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Mas'ud.
Junbish	Junbish Milli Islami (National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan). Alliance of northern non-Pashtun militias, predominantly Uzbek. Includes many former communists. Based in Mazar-i Sharif. Supported by Uzbekistan. SCC member. Leader: Ahmad Rashid Dustam.
Mahaz	Mahaz-i Milli-yi Islami (National Islamic Front of Afghanistan). Traditionalist and royalist party with members from Pashtun tribes. Little foreign support or military presence. Leader: Sayyid Ahmad Gailani.
SCC	Supreme Coordination Council of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (SCCIRA)/High Council for Coordination of the Islamic Revolution of Afghanistan (HCCIRA). Anti-Rabbani opposition alliance of Dustam's Junbish, Hikmatyar's Hizb, Khalili's Wahdat and Mujadaddi's Jabha. Established January 1994.
Taliban	Ulama'-led Islamic student army, composed predominantly of Sunni Pashtuns, which emerged in October 1994. Want to end Mujahidin infighting, corruption and institute Islamic law throughout the country. Anti-Shi'i. Based in Kandahar. Militarily supported by Pakistan and funded by Saudi Arabia[1] (*The Herald* Dec. 1995, 62).
Wahdat	Hizb-i Wahdat (Unity Movement): Coalition of eight Hazara Shi'i groups from central Afghanistan. Based in Bamiyan. Supported by Iran. Leaders: In March 1995 Karim Khalili replaced Ali Mazar as leader of the Hizb faction affiliated to the SCC. Muhammad Akbari leads the pro-Rabbani faction.

MAP

See original

Source: *Afghanistan: A Country Study* 1986, p. xx.

INTRODUCTION

This chronology focuses on the military and related political developments in Afghanistan between January 1995 and January 1997, identifying the key players and chronicling the ever-changing military and political alliances. The ultimate objective of each group is the capture of Kabul, and political and military alliances are made and broken with this goal in mind. Although this chronology also includes information on the situation of women in Taliban-controlled areas, and on the repatriation of Afghan refugees from abroad, it does not deal with the situation of Tajik refugees in northern Afghanistan.

This chronology supplements and updates the information provided in the DIRB's Extended Response to Information Request AFG21226.E of 17 July 1995, and should be read in conjunction with that Response. It does not detail the human rights abuses endured by the civilian population of Afghanistan. These abuses are described at great length by Amnesty International, which also describes the disintegration of women's and prisoners' rights through the enforcement of Islamic punishments in Taliban-controlled areas. For information on these issues please consult the following Amnesty International publications, all available at Regional Documentation Centres: *Afghanistan: Grave Abuses in the Name of Religion* (18 November 1996); *Afghanistan: International Responsibility for Human Rights Disaster* (November 1995); *Women in Afghanistan: A Human Rights Catastrophe* (May 1995); *Afghanistan: Executions, Amputations, and Possible Deliberate and Arbitrary Killings* (April 1995); and *Afghanistan: The Human Rights Crisis and the Refugees* (February 1995).

CHRONOLOGY

1995

January

Sources indicate that over 200,000 displaced people are living in central Kabul (AI 1996, 67) and over 300,000 in camps near Jalalabad, in Nangarhar province (ibid.; *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1290). Nearly 3 million Afghans have sought refuge outside Afghanistan, including 1.2 million in Pakistan and 1.7 million in Iran, of whom 450,000 live in Khorasan province (UN 20 Jan. 1995, 10; USCR 1995, 99).

A spokesperson for the Taliban, the Islamic student army that first appeared in October 1994, claims the movement now controls five of Afghanistan's 30 provinces[2] (*Keesing's* Jan. 1995b, 40363).

1 January

Following President Burhanuddin Rabbani's refusal to step down when his term ended on 28 December 1994[3], UN peace envoy Mahmoud Mistiri returns to Kabul and resumes his peace efforts with opposition leaders (*Keesing's* Jan. 1995a, 40363; Xinhua 21 Feb. 1995).

10 January

President Rabbani offers to step down and turn over power to a 23-member UN interim administration if Hizb-i Islami leader and former prime minister Gulbuddin Hikmatyar stops shelling the capital, opens its roads and removes his heavy weapons (UPI 22 Jan. 1995). On 12 January the opposition forces announce a cease-fire, which they claim will become permanent if Rabbani resigns and hands over power to an all-party administration (ibid.). On 19 January Hikmatyar's forces bomb the capital, killing at least 22 people and wounding many (ibid.; Xinhua 20 Jan. 1995).

22-31 January

There is heavy fighting in Kunduz town and Kunduz province, during which aircraft of Ahmad Rashid Dustam's Junbish Milli Islami (National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan) repeatedly bomb government positions (Reuters 26 Jan. 1995; AFP 25 Jan. 1995; Xinhua 31 Jan. 1995). According to local press reports the fighting in Kunduz province results in at least 100 people killed and over 120 wounded, mainly civilians (ibid.). Kunduz town falls to Dustam's Uzbek forces on 5 February (*MEI* 17 Mar. 1995, 15; *Keesing's* Feb. 1995b, 40406), but is recaptured by Rabbani's forces on 13 February (ibid.). One source states that Dustam's forces "engage in widespread, systematic looting of the city" (*Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1290).

28 January

Mahmoud Mistiri reports that plans are being finalized to transfer power from Rabbani to an interim council representing all opposition factions (*Keesing's* Jan. 1995a, 40363).

Late January

Hikmatyar's Hizb-i Islami forces are pushed out of Ghazni province by the Taliban, who have allied themselves with Rabbani's forces for this particular operation (AFP 25 Jan. 1995; *The Herald* Feb. 1995, 55-56). Hikmatyar loses hundreds of men and several tanks (ibid., 55).

3 February

In Kabul, unidentified men kill the wife and children of Muhammad Zerais (Zeray), a former communist government cabinet minister between 1978 and 1985 (*Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1288; AI 1996, 68; UPI 3 Feb. 1995). One source indicates that Zerais is killed as well (ibid.).

14 February

The Taliban defeat Hikmatyar's forces at Charasiab, his headquarters in Logar province, 30 km south of Kabul (UPI 14 Feb. 1995; *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 1996, 27; *Keesing's* Feb. 1995b, 40406). Hikmatyar's stronghold at Maydan

Shahr, capital of Wardag province, had fallen on 7 or 10 February (ibid.; *MEI* 17 Mar. 1995, 15; *Asiaweek* 3 Mar. 1995, 26), while Pul-i Alam, capital of Loghar province, fell on 11 or 13 February (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 11 Feb. 1995; *Keesing's* Feb. 1995b, 40406). Several sources indicate that these defeats eliminate the Hizb as a major military player in the civil war (*Refugee Survey Quarterly* 1996, 17; *MEI* 17 Mar. 1995, 15; USCR 1996, 94).

Mid-February

According to two sources, the Taliban now control at least ten provinces and are within 15 km of Kabul (*Keesing's* Feb. 1995a, 40406; *Asian Survey* July 1995, 623). Now outside of the ethnically Pashtun areas from which they receive most of their support, the Taliban face stiff opposition from Ahmad Shah Mas'ud and Rabbani's troops when they move on predominantly Tajik Kabul (*Current History* Jan. 1996, 42).

20 February

Afghan officials arrest Pakistani journalists Intikhab Amir of *The Daily Dawn* and freelance photographer Ghffar Baig, but release them after 72 hours of interrogation (RSF 1996, 210-11; UPI 25 Mar. 1995; DPA 25 Mar. 1995).

22 February

Due to resign the previous day, Rabbani announces his decision to delay his resignation until 21 March, stating he will not step down unless the Taliban are included in the interim administration (*Asiaweek* 3 Mar. 1995, 26; *Keesing's* Feb. 1995c, 40406). Talks stall, however, when the Taliban set three conditions for participation: only "good Muslims" may participate in the interim administration, all 30 provinces must be represented, and Kabul must be policed by a "neutral force" under Taliban control. The talks are unsuccessful (ibid.; Xinhua 21 Feb. 1995).

25-27 February

Government and Hizb-i Wahdat forces fight in Kabul's southwestern areas of Karte Seh, Kote Sangi and Karte Chahar, resulting in ten dead and about 12 wounded (IRNA 27 Feb. 1995; Xinhua 27 Feb. 1995; AFP 26 Feb. 1995).

6-10 March

On 6 March Rabbani's army attacks the Wahdat, Hikmatyar's ally, in southwest Kabul (*The Herald* Mar. 1995, 46; *Keesing's* Mar. 1995a, 40453; DPA 7 Mar. 1995). Karte Seh district and Kote Sangi, Karte Char, Pule Sokhta and Darulaman areas are affected by the fighting (ibid.). On 8 March, facing defeat, his supply and escape routes blocked by the Taliban, Wahdat leader Abdul Ali Mazari strikes a deal allowing the Taliban to move into the city to occupy the Wahdat front lines (*The Herald* Mar. 1995, 46; *Keesing's* Mar. 1995a, 40453; AI Apr. 1995, 4). However, the Taliban disarm the Wahdat, capture Mazari (ibid.; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 12 Mar. 1995), and then attack Rabbani's forces (*The Economist* 18-24 Mar. 1995, 38; *Keesing's* Mar. 1995a, 40453; AFP 11 Mar. 1995). The number of casualties range from an estimated 100 people killed and 1,000 wounded, the majority civilians (*Keesing's* Mar. 1995a, 40453; *The Economist* 18-24 Mar. 1995, 38), to 1,500 killed (AI 1996, 67; USCR 1996, 95).

9 March

Following discussions with the Taliban, Harakat leader Muhammad Nabi withdraws his support for Rabbani and asks party members to resign their posts in the Rabbani cabinet (IRNA 11 Mar. 1995).

12 March

Rabbani's army launches an offensive that drives the Taliban out of Karte Seh and back to Charasiab, marking the Taliban's first defeat (DPA 12 Mar. 1995; *Keesing's* Mar. 1995b, 40453). As they retreat the Taliban shell the capital, "thereby shattering their reputation as a benevolent faction that sought to restore peace to Afghanistan" (*Current History* Jan. 1996, 42). Sources indicate that Rabbani's forces go on a rampage against the Hazara population of Karte Seh, looting homes and beating, raping and killing civilians (AI 16 Mar. 1995; ibid. 1996, 68; *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1288; *The Economist* 18-24 Mar. 1995, 38).

Ahmad Hosseini (Hossain), director of the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA) in Iran's interior ministry, announces an agreement with the UNHCR in which 500,000 Afghan refugees will be repatriated over the

following year (USCR 1996, 110; *Gulf Newsletter* June-July 1994, 6; AFP 14 Mar. 1995). Beginning 21 March 1995, 400,000 Afghans with temporary residence permits must voluntarily leave Iran or face forced removal to refugee camps, with an additional 100,000 living illegally in Iran subject to deportation (ibid.; IRIB 13 Mar. 1995; USCR 1996, 110). According to the US Committee for Refugees (USCR), to encourage Afghan refugees to leave, Iranian authorities refuse to renew work permits, raid Afghan work sites, stop health subsidies and declare unlawful many marriages between Afghan refugees and Iranian citizens (also see 22 June 1995 entry) (ibid.).

13 March

Wahdat leader Ali Mazari is killed, under unclear circumstances, while held captive by the Taliban (Al Apr. 1995, 4-5; *Keesing's* Mar. 1995b, 40453). On 19 March Karim Khalili is proclaimed Wahdat "provisional" leader (ibid.; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 19 Mar. 1995). One source indicates that a split emerges in the Wahdat following Mazari's death, with Khalili's faction supporting Dustam and the Hizb-i Islami, and Muhammad Akbari's faction supporting Rabbani (USCR 1996, 94)[4].

16 March

Rabbani announces that he is not ready to resign on 21 March 1995, and on 20 March the transfer of power to an interim government is delayed another 15 days (*Keesing's* Mar. 1995c, 40453).

19 March

The army pushes the Taliban out of their Charasiab headquarters and further back into Logar province (*Keesing's* Mar. 1995b, 40453; IRIB 19 Mar. 1995).

25 March

Pakistani Behroz Khan and American Ian Steward, both UPI journalists, are arrested by the authorities at Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel, allegedly for holding improper travel documents (*Index on Censorship* May-June 1995, 168; UPI 25 Mar. 1995; RSF 1996, 211). They are released approximately 30 hours later (UPI 31 Mar. 1995).

30 March

A mass grave containing 22 male corpses, 20 of which are Shi'i Hazaras, is reportedly discovered at Charasiab (Al Apr. 1995, 5; *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1288). Each has been shot in the head at least once. In late February Charasiab had been controlled by the Hizb-i Islami, allied to the Wahdat, but was subsequently captured by the Taliban, who lost the town to Rabbani's forces in March. It is not clear which group is responsible for the killings (ibid.; Al Apr. 1995, 5).

1 April

In Mazar-i Sharif, Hikmatyar is removed as the head of the four-party anti-Rabbani alliance, the Supreme Coordination Council (SCC), and is replaced by Jabha-yi Nijat-i Milli leader Sibghatullah Mujaddadi (Xinhua 2 Apr. 1995; *MEI* 12 May 1995, 15; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1 Apr. 1995).

4 April

Approximately 800 government soldiers are killed and 300 captured by the Taliban in Farah province (IRNA 4 Apr. 1995). Later in the month the Taliban are forced to retreat from their positions (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 21 Apr. 1995), but still claim to be in "full control" of Farah and Nimruz provinces (Radio Message of Freedom 22 Apr. 1995).

Early May

Rabbani's government forces attack Taliban bases around Maydan Shahr, to which the Taliban had retreated after their defeat in Kabul (*Keesing's* May 1995a, 40549; DPA 22 May 1995). Fighting continues throughout the month (Radio Message of Freedom 12 May 1995; ibid. 21 May 1995; DPA 22 May 1995).

3-4 May

In response to the government's 3 April invitation, India and Pakistan agree to reopen their diplomatic missions in Kabul (*Keesing's* May 1995b, 40549; *Keesing's* Apr. 1995, 40505; AFP 3 May 1995).

5 May

The Kabul offices of the cultural independent weekly *Subh Omid* (Dawn of Hope) are attacked by armed militants and its journalists intimidated, according to Reporters sans frontières (1996, 211). In April *Subh Omid* had been repeatedly harassed by a military commander suspected of corruption. In October Rabbani replaces *Subh Omid*'s entire editorial staff and tightens control of its editorial content (ibid.).

11 May

The forces of Rabbani and Jamiat governor Ismail Khan capture Farah province from the Taliban (Radio Message of Freedom 12 May 1995). Ismail Khan's forces had reportedly dropped cluster bombs during an early May retaliatory attack on Farah, killing between 220 and 250 unarmed civilians (AI 1996, 68; also see IRNA 7 May 1995). On 14 or 16 May the Taliban lose Helmand province to Rabbani and Khan's forces (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 16 May 1995; *Keesing's* May 1995a, 40549), and Nimruz province is lost on 15 May (IRNA 15 May 1995; Xinhua 16 May 1995; DPA 22 May 1995). The Taliban deny having been defeated in Farah and Nimruz provinces, however, claiming they retreated to save the civilian population from attack (ibid.).

5 June

Dustam's forces attack Rabbani's forces in Samangan province to the north, and more than 20 people are killed in the ensuing battle. Both forces continue to fight in northern Baghlan province (Xinhua 6 June 1995).

9 June

Rabbani's government and the Taliban sign a 10-day country-wide truce involving a prisoner exchange, free movement of civilian traffic across front lines, and the extension of peace talks (Reuters 9 June 1995; AI 1996, 67; *Keesing's* June 1995a, 40601).

15 June

Dustam's forces carry out bombing raids over Kabul and Kunduz city (Reuters 16 June 1995). Two 550-lb bombs land in Kabul's Sharinau residential area, killing two people and injuring one, and three land near the defence ministry. It is unclear from reports how many bombs are dropped over Kunduz (ibid.).

20 June

Government forces and the pro-Rabbani (Akbari) faction of the Wahdat capture Bamiyan town from the Wahdat (Khalili), and are in control of Bamiyan province by 23 June (*Keesing's* June 1995b, 40601; Reuters 21 June 1995; ibid. 24 July 1995). The Wahdat (Khalili) and SCC had captured Bamiyan from an independent *shura* (council) on 20 May (Radio Message of Freedom 22 May 1995; Reuters 21 June 1995). Khalili's Wahdat have had their headquarters in Bamiyan town since being driven out of Kabul in March 1995 (ibid. 24 July 1995).

22 June

Iran begins repatriating 400,000 Afghan refugees from Azarbayjan province under a trilateral Iran-Afghanistan-UNHCR agreement (Xinhua 22 June 1995; UPI 22 Aug. 1995; *Keesing's* June 1995c, 40601). Preparations are also under way to repatriate an additional 500,000 Afghans who hold long-term residence cards (ibid.; Xinhua 22 June 1995). According to Ahmad Hosseini, Iran's BAFIA director, the Afghan refugees are repatriating voluntarily (ibid.; UPI 22 Aug. 1995). On 25 June the Afghan consul-general in Mashhad, Iran, announces that Afghans leaving for Afghanistan face no security problems, and that the return routes for refugees through Herat[5] to Kabul and the southwest and southern regions, as well as the central regions, are safe (see 12 March 1995 entry) (Voice of the

Islamic Republic of Iran 25 June 1995).

29 June

Fighting between Rabbani's forces and the Taliban resumes in Maydan Shahr, Wardag province, specifically in the areas of Sanglakh and Kotal-e Takht (Radio Message of Freedom 30 June 1995).

Sardar Wali, the envoy of former King Zahir Shah, holds talks in Islamabad, Pakistan with various Afghans, including tribal leaders, and Pakistani government officials (UN 27 Feb. 1996, 5). Wali announces that Zahir Shah is willing to participate in the peace process (ibid.; Xinhua 8 July 1995). Xinhua reports that the pro-royalist Afghan Social Democratic Party (ASDP) has recently reemerged after a 16-year absence (ibid. 29 July 1995).

23 July

Dustam's Junbish and Khalili's Wahdat recapture Bamiyan province from Rabbani just one month after losing it. Bamiyan has changed hands several times in recent months (Reuters 24 July 1995).

30 July

Rabbani proposes to UN special envoy Mahmoud Mistiri that a commission of intellectuals be set up, to consist of representatives from the provinces, the universities, the High Court, and the Academy of Science, but without representation from any of the political parties (Xinhua 30 July 1995; *The Economist* 22-28 July 1995, 37; *Keesing's* July 1995, 40647; Xinhua 23 July 1995). The proposed commission would form a grand assembly for one year, elect a national leader and write a constitution, with a parliament being formed from the grand assembly members (see 11 October 1995 entry) (ibid.).

A Taliban spokesperson in Quetta, Pakistan reportedly denies local reports that the Taliban have split into pro-Rabbani, anti-Rabbani and neutral factions (ibid.).

3 August

In Kandahar the Taliban hijack a Russian cargo aircraft carrying arms intended for Rabbani, and take its seven-man crew prisoner (*The Herald* Oct. 1995, 35; Interfax 15 Aug. 1995; *Keesing's* Aug. 1995, 40681). In response Russia suspends all flights to Afghanistan (Radio Russia 12 Sept. 1995). Taliban conditions for release of the crewmen include the release of thousands of Afghan fighters captured during the Soviet occupation, and an end to Russian interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs (*Keesing's* Aug. 1995, 40681; Interfax 15 Aug. 1995; *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1288). On 16 August 1996, after more than a year in captivity, the seven Russians escape their Taliban guards and return to Moscow via the United Arab Emirates (AFP 18 Aug. 1996; *Keesing's* Aug. 1996a, 41230).

17 August

Approximately 400 Afghan refugee families leave Iran's Sistan Balochestan province for Afghanistan (IRNA 17 Aug. 1995), and another 300 Afghan refugee families repatriate from the same province on 22 August (UPI 22 Aug. 1995). Both groups, which return by bus, receive financial and other assistance from Iran and the UN (IRNA 17 Aug. 1995; UPI 22 Aug. 1995). An Iranian official reportedly threatens legal action against those Afghan refugees holding temporary residence permits who remain in Iran and have not obeyed the deadline to repatriate (ibid.).

21 August

In response to the "spread of immoral films," Afghan Film closes all Kabul cinemas for one month (IRNA 23 Aug. 1995; *Index on Censorship* Sept.-Oct. 1995, 169). On 24 August 1995 "all centres of cultural corruption" in Kabul are shut down, hundreds of Indian and British videos destroyed, and songs featuring female singers forbidden in the media (ibid.; IRNA 23 Aug. 1995; ibid. 24 Aug. 1995).

28 August

Government forces capture Girishk and Helmand province from the Taliban, who retake Girishk two days later and begin to advance on Herat city (*The Herald* Sept. 1995, 69; *Keesing's* Sept. 1995a, 40728).

31 August

The government forbids a 12-women delegation to attend the September 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, due to agenda items deemed un-Islamic such as family planning, abortion and premarital sex (Reuters 31 Aug. 1995; AI 1996, 67; *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1293).

September

Dustam captures the northwestern province of Badghis from Rabbani (AI 1996, 67; *The Herald* Sept. 1995, 68).

2 September

The Taliban capture the eastern province of Farah and the next day take the city of Shindand, site of Afghanistan's "largest air force base" (*The Herald* Sept. 1995, 69; *Keesing's* Sept. 1995a, 40728; *The Washington Post* 4 Sept. 1995).

3 September

The opposition SCC warns that any planes crossing SCC airspace without permission will be either shot or forced down (*The Washington Post* 4 Sept. 1995; *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1291). On 9 September it issues a final warning, the earlier one having been ignored by several foreign airlines (UPI 9 Sept. 1995).

5 September

Herat city, Afghanistan's gateway to Iran, falls to the Taliban with little resistance from Jamiat governor Ismail Khan, who flees with his forces to the Iranian city of Mashhad (*The Herald* Sept. 1995, 68-69; IPS 25 Oct. 1995; *Keesing's* Sept. 1995a, 40728). Observers believe the recent informal alliance between Hikmatyar, Dustam and the Taliban was key to the latter's success in Herat, as was Dustam's bombing of the city (ibid., 40729; *The Herald* Sept. 1995, 68). The population of Herat, the first Farsi-speaking city captured by the Taliban, is more sophisticated and religiously liberal than the Taliban are used to (ibid., 69). The population is quickly alienated by the Taliban's strict enforcement of the Shari'a, confinement of women to their homes, and closure of girls' schools[6] (ibid.; IPS 25 Oct. 1995; UN 27 Feb. 1996, 15-16).

The Taliban now control 13 of Afghanistan's 30 provinces, while the SCC holds eight and Rabbani holds Kabul and five other provinces (*MEI* 6 Oct. 1995, 13; UPI 9 Sept. 1995).

6 September

Concerned about the Taliban's capture of Herat, Iran closes its border with Afghanistan and, along with the UNHCR, halts the repatriation process begun in June (*Keesing's* Sept. 1995c, 40729; AFP 5 Sept. 1995; USCR 1996, 111). Repatriation of those leaving without UNHCR assistance restarts on 11 September, while the UNHCR reactivates its program in November 1995 (ibid.).

Following an official Afghan complaint to the UN about Pakistani "interference" in Afghan affairs, a mob of 5,000 Afghans swarms the Pakistani embassy in Kabul, killing one and wounding 26, including the Pakistani ambassador (*MEI* 6 Oct. 1995, 13; UPI 9 Sept. 1995; *Keesing's* Sept. 1995b, 40729). On 10 September Pakistani Prime Minister Bhutto states that the Pakistani embassy will remain closed until security can be guaranteed, but diplomatic ties with Afghanistan will not be broken (ibid.). The embassy reopens on 14 August 1996 (IRNA 14 Aug. 1996).

16 September

Iranian BBC correspondent Kasra Naji, the sole foreigner to penetrate Herat city since its 5 September capture, is expelled from Herat by the Taliban for biased reporting (RSF 1996, 211; *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1291).

21 September

In Kandahar city the Taliban force down a Boeing 747 belonging to the state-owned Ariana Airlines (Reuters 21 Sept. 1995). The aircraft is reportedly in violation of Taliban airspace and carrying military spare parts (ibid.). The Taliban had forced an Ariana plane to land in Kandahar in August 1995, but then permitted it to continue after verifying that it carried only commercial cargo (ibid.). The Taliban had earlier threatened to shoot down any aircraft violating their airspace (see 3 August 1995 entry) (ibid.; *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1291).

Pakistan expels 13 Afghan diplomats without providing an official explanation (*Keesing's* Sept. 1995b, 40729). Ambassador to Pakistan Masud Halili is expelled on 9 October, and six more Afghan diplomats are expelled on 18 October, allegedly in response to the 6 September attack on the Pakistani embassy (ibid. Oct. 1995b, 40776). Pakistan requests $15 million in compensation, closes Ittihad's Afghan Islamic University in Peshawar, and announces the withdrawal of facilities for all of the factions ruling Kabul (*MEI* 20 Oct. 1995, 14).

11 October

The Taliban capture the town of Charasiab, located 25 km south of Kabul, and attack Kabul (*Keesing's* Oct. 1995, 40776). An unknown number of people are killed and at least 550 wounded in heavy artillery and rocket fire. Rabbani's army reportedly forces the Taliban to retreat from the capital on 16 October, but fighting between the two parties resumes four days later (ibid.).

The national reconciliation commission, composed of Kabul University lecturers, scholars from the Academy of Science and other members of the intelligentsia (see 30 July 1995 entry), presents its peace proposals to Rabbani (Radio Afghanistan 11 Oct. 1995). The commission plans to travel to the east and south to present its proposals to provincial officials (ibid.).

15 October

Rabbani's forces lose Bamiyan to the Taliban but recapture Sanglakh valley, located less than 20 km west of Taliban-controlled Maydan Shahr (*Keesing's* Oct. 1995, 40776).

6 or 7 November

Following talks with UN peace envoy Mahmoud Mistiri, President Rabbani offers to resign in exchange for an immediate cease-fire by the Taliban, an end to "foreign intervention," and other concessions (*Keesing's* Nov. 1995b, 40825; UN 27 Feb. 1996, 6). However, hostilities break out in Kabul before the offer can be considered and negotiations are suspended (ibid.).

10 November

In protest against Taliban closures of girls' schools, primarily in the cities of Herat and Jalalabad, UNICEF suspends its education and training programmes in Taliban-controlled areas (AFP 12 Mar. 1996; *Sunday Times* 24 Mar. 1996; *Keesing's* Nov. 1995c, 40825).

11 November

The Taliban fire over 170 rockets and shells on residential areas in Kabul, killing at least 35 people and wounding about 50 (AI 16 Nov. 1995; *Keesing's* Nov. 1995a, 40825; Reuters 11 Nov. 1995). Areas hit in Kabul include Foruzga Market, Taimani district, Bagh Bala district to the northwest, and Wazir Akbar Khan, where many of the small foreign community live (ibid.; AI 16 Nov. 1995). According to Amnesty International, the attack on residential areas is a recent change in strategy from attacks only on military targets (ibid.). Approximately 21 people are killed in another Taliban attack on 13 November (*Keesing's* Nov. 1995a, 40825).

Rabbani's forces fight Dustam's in Balkh province and take Balahisar, Abdolabad, Zerka, Madrasa and Labani regions (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 11 Nov. 1995).

26 November

Kabul sees intense fighting between Rabbani's forces and the Taliban, who launch some of their "most destructive air

strikes" against the city (*Keesing's* Nov. 1995a, 40825). Residential areas are not exempt from attack and 23 to 40 people are reported killed and 140 wounded (ibid.; AFP 26 Nov. 1995; Reuters 1 Dec. 1995). Government forces eventually push the Taliban back approximately 20-25 km southeast of Kabul (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 30 Nov. 1995; *Keesing's* Dec. 1995, 40867). A 30 November Taliban rocket attack on a Kabul market area kills 17 people and injures 26 (ibid.; Reuters 1 Dec. 1995).

27 November

The Jabha leadership announces its withdrawal from the SCC, and Jabha leader Mujaddadi resigns as SCC president (Radio Message of Freedom 10 Jan. 1996), but on 13 February 1996 Mujaddadi retracts his resignation and rejoins the SCC (ibid. 14 Feb. 1996).

1 December

Government forces bomb Taliban positions south of Kabul. The Taliban return fire, hitting Kabul residential areas and the airport (Reuters 1 Dec. 1995).

5 December

Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran reports that thousands of youths and children demonstrate in Kabul, calling for an end to the bombing of residential areas and to the civil war (6 Dec. 1996). The demonstrators submit a resolution to a UN representative calling for action to stop the killing of Afghan civilians (ibid.).

9 December

Government forces bomb a "suspected training camp" and attack Taliban positions at the town of Charasiab, where in mid-October the Taliban had set up an "operational headquarters" for their offensive on Kabul (Reuters 10 Dec. 1995). Between 27 and 37 Taliban fighters are reported killed (ibid.). Government aircraft are blamed for destroying several homes and killing at least seven civilians (ibid.).

12 December

The Taliban shell Kabul heavily, killing many civilians and causing much destruction of property (*The Economist* 16-22 Dec. 1995, 35; *Keesing's* Dec. 1995, 40867). The Taliban attack Kabul's residential areas again on 19 December, causing substantial damage to property and numerous casualties (ibid.).

25 December

The Taliban launch rocket attacks on Kabul; further attacks occur on 27 and 30 December (*Keesing's* Dec. 1995, 40867; Radio Afghanistan 28 Dec. 1995).

30 December

Rabbani's delegation of aviation minister Abdur Rehman, presidential spokesperson Abdul Aziz Morad and senior official Maulvi Abdul Aziz meet with Dustam in the city of Mazar-i Sharif to discuss a possible "negotiated settlement" (AFP 31 Dec. 1995). Rabbani claims he is prepared to travel to each faction's headquarters to negotiate (IPS 2 Jan. 1996). Ittihad leader Sayyaf, allied to Rabbani, is reportedly in Jalalabad for peace talks with the ruling Nangarhar *shura* (AFP 31 Dec. 1995).

1996

2-3 January

Alleged Taliban rocket attacks kill 20 to 24 and wound 43 to 56 people in west Kabul residential areas, specifically Dasht-e Azadagan, Qala-e Shada, Pol-e Sokhtah, Qala-e Nazer and Char Qala (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 2 Jan. 1996; Reuters 3 Jan. 1996). Defence ministry officials claim the Taliban are attempting to undermine Rabbani's latest peace overture to opposition leaders (ibid.).

10 January

The government proposes a peace plan to the Taliban and the opposition. The proposal calls for an immediate cease-fire, the lifting of roadblocks by all parties, an exchange of POWs, and the start of peace talks (*Keesing's* Jan. 1996, 40905; Reuters 11 Jan. 1996). Rabbani makes no mention of stepping down as president (ibid.).

10-12 January

Kabul residential areas are subjected to more Taliban rocket attacks, causing further destruction, deaths and injuries (Reuters 11 Jan. 1996; ibid. 12 Jan. 1996). Radio Afghanistan reports further attacks on 18 and 19 January (19 Jan. 1996).

14 January

Hikmatyar's Hizb blocks Kabul's eastern route, leaving the capital completely blockaded by opposition forces, according to AFP (24 Jan. 1996). Due to disagreements over the collection of road taxes, all four routes to Kabul are now completely closed: the southern routes by the Taliban, the northern one by Junbish, and the eastern route by Hikmatyar (ibid.). Prices for all basic commodities rise 60 per cent within ten days (ibid.; ibid. 25 Jan. 1996).

Mid-January

The Rabbani government and pro-Irani Shi'i party Hizb-i Wahdat (Khalili) reportedly sign a peace agreement that includes a cease-fire, prisoner exchange and reopening of the Kabul-Bamiyan road; the Wahdat is expected to withdraw from the anti-Rabbani SCC (AFP 14 Jan. 1996; ITAR-TASS 15 Jan. 1996). A military alliance is not anticipated, but the treaty is expected to alleviate the food and fuel shortage caused by the blockade of Kabul (ibid.; AFP 14 Jan. 1996).

20 January

Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran reports heavy fighting between rival Taliban factions in Kandahar province, resulting in dozens of deaths (21 Jan. 1996). Muhammad Umar, the leader of one faction, wants talks with Rabbani to bring peace to the country, while Mullah Borjan wants the fight against Rabbani to continue. The leader of yet another Taliban faction, Mullah Rabbani (no relation to President Rabbani), remains neutral. This division has led to bitter fights in several provinces, including Ghazni, Wardag and Logar (see 23 July 1995 entry) (ibid.).

29 January

Besieged Kabulis demonstrate near Rabbani's presidential palace, demanding that he step down and hand over power to an interim government (Radio Message of Freedom 31 Jan. 1996). One week earlier approximately 150 war wounded had marched through Kabul streets to protest the capital's blockade (AFP 24 Jan. 1996).

The Taliban bomb and fire 13 rockets on Kabul residential areas (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 29 Jan. 1996; Radio Afghanistan 29 Jan. 1996). Eight more rockets are fired on Kabul residential areas on 30 and 31 January, causing minor damage (ibid. 31 Jan. 1996; ibid. 1 Feb. 1996).

February

One source reports that the Taliban are press-ganging male Herat residents, some as young as 15 (*The Ottawa Citizen* 17 Feb. 1996).

1 February

Taliban jets drop four bombs on a residential area near Kabul's Pol-e Kheshti grand mosque centre, killing 10 civilians and wounding others, according to Radio Afghanistan (1 Feb. 1996). This and a 31 January Taliban attack that killed 10 prompt Kabul residents to demonstrate in front of the presidential palace, demanding an end to the Taliban's "barbaric actions" (ibid.). On 5-6 February the Taliban again fire rockets at the capital's residential areas, killing 15

people. Government forces retaliate by bombing Taliban positions to the south of Kabul (ibid. 6 Feb. 1996).

3 February

The first shipment of Red Cross emergency food supplies reaches the beleaguered capital (UN 27 Feb. 1996, 7; AFP 3 Feb. 1996). Planes will fly from Peshawar three times a day to supply basic food stuffs to approximately 100,000 Kabulis, particularly those at risk such as widows, children and the elderly (ibid.). About 400 trucks carrying food and fuel via the eastern Kabul-Jalalabad-Pakistan highway arrive on 6 February, providing temporary relief from the three-week blockade (ibid. 7 Feb. 1996). Another 200 trucks arrive on 7 February, and as many as 300 additional trucks are expected. It is unclear whether Hikmatyar has permanently reopened the eastern route (ibid.); militiamen are reportedly demanding the equivalent of $450 per truck to enter Kabul from the east (Reuters 8 Feb. 1996).

11 February

Taliban and government forces exchange shell fire in the Rishkhor area of southern Kabul, although two areas in southwestern Kabul are also hit (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 12 Feb. 1996).

14 February

UN- and Pakistan-initiated peace talks in Islamabad between Hikmatyar, Dustam, Taliban leader Ehsanollah, the Shi'is and the Ismailis, end without agreement (UPI 12 Feb. 1996; *Keesing's* Feb. 1996, 40951). On 22 February Rabbani begins a new round of talks with Hikmatyar in Kabul and the town of Sarobi (ibid.).

26 or 28 February

Clashes between Hikmatyar's Hizb and Sayed Jafar Nadiri's Ismaili faction, which is allied to Dustam, break out in the industrial town of Pul-i-Khumri,[7] in Baghlan province, following the murder of Hizb commander Haji Nawab (AFP 3 Mar. 1996; Reuters 3 Mar. 1996). The Ismailis lose 11 important positions to the Hizb (ibid. 4 Mar. 1996). By 4 March a cease-fire is in effect and peace talks under way, but not before hundreds of people have been killed, wounded or displaced (ibid.).

27 February

The UNHCR reports that approximately 391,000 Afghan asylum-seekers were repatriated to Afghanistan in 1995 (UN 27 Feb. 1996, 9). Of these, 77,000 receiving UNHCR repatriation packages returned from Pakistan and 92,000 from Iran, while an additional 76,000 voluntarily returned from Pakistan and 103,000 to 146,000 from Iran (ibid.; USCR 1996, 97). Between 300,000 and 400,000 internally displaced people live in Jalalabad and its five camps (UN 27 Feb. 1996, 13).

March

The opposition's Radio Message of Freedom reports that in Logar province, Maydan Shahr city and other Taliban-controlled areas, one member per household is being press-ganged into hard labour, and the Taliban are commandeering vehicles belonging to the local populace (23 Mar. 1996). The Taliban are also confiscating 10 per cent of the earnings of the local population, justifying the action as being the religious duty of all Muslims to pay (ibid.).

4 March

Save the Children UK suspends its operations in Taliban-controlled areas because the restrictions imposed on women hinder its work and the effectiveness of its programs (UPI 13 Oct. 1996; VOA 12 Mar. 1996). The decision will be reviewed in six months (see 20 October 1996 entry) (ibid.).

7 March

The Rabbani government and Hikmatyar's Hizb sign an agreement to take joint military action against the Taliban (*Keesing's* Mar. 1996, 41002; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 7 Mar. 1996). The agreement envisions a Kabul-

based combined defence council composed of five representatives from the government and its allies, including Khalili's Wahdat, the Harakat and the Ittihad, as well as four Hizb members (ibid.). Both sides signed an earlier agreement to restore electric power to Kabul (ibid.; *Keesing's* Mar. 1996, 41002).

12-13 March

Government forces, retaliating for the Taliban's 4-5 March attacks on Kabul residential areas, hit Taliban positions in the towns Charasiab and Muhammad Agha, killing 13 to 16 Taliban fighters (AP 12 Mar. 1996; *Keesing's* Mar. 1996, 41002).

13 March

Ahmad Hosseini, BAFIA director in Iran's interior ministry, announces that the repatriation of 250,000 Afghan asylum-seekers to northern Afghanistan via Turkmenistan will recommence on 10 April 1996, under an agreement between Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and the UNHCR (AFP 18 Mar. 1996; IRNA 13 Mar. 1996). Each departing Afghan will receive $25 in cash, a rug and 50 kg of wheat. Hosseini adds that beginning 20 March 1996, the residence permits of Afghan refugees will be withdrawn and they will be forced to leave (ibid.).

24 March

The Taliban shell Kabul, killing 18 to 23 people and injuring 14 to 24 (AFP 25 Mar. 1996; *Keesing's* Mar. 1996, 41002). Government forces retaliate on 26 or 27 March, bombing Taliban positions outside Kabul and killing at least 50 people (ibid.; *The Herald* Apr. 1996, 50-51).

30 March

The Taliban call a meeting in Kandahar city of 1000 ulama' (religious scholars) to determine the future plan of action[8] (*The Herald* Apr. 1996, 51; Xinhua 4 Apr. 1996). Although the ulama' pledge allegiance to Taliban leader Muhammad Umar and nominate him as amir al-mu'minin (leader of the believers), on 4 April, the SCC rejects his nomination (ibid.). On 16 April the Supreme Court rules that Umar's appointment as amir al-mu'minin is un-Islamic because he has only one eye (Radio Afghanistan 16 Apr. 1996; *Keesing's* Apr. 1996, 41047).

11 April

Government forces take over Taliban-controlled Saghar district in Ghor province, reportedly capturing heavy and light artillery and ammunition (Radio Message of Freedom 11 Apr. 1996). Fighting continues in Chaghcharan district, and on either 8 or 19 April the Taliban seize Sharak district, their fifth district in Ghor, inflicting heavy losses on government forces (Reuters 10 Apr. 1996; AFP 20 Apr. 1996).

18 April

Civil servants in Herat city are ordered to wear turbans and sport beards or lose their jobs (*Sunday Times* 24 Mar. 1996; AFP 18 Apr. 1996). A university professor and administrator are reportedly dismissed after refusing to comply (ibid.).

4 May

The Taliban shell Iran's embassy in Kabul, badly damaging it and slightly wounding two embassy staff members (AFP 5 May 1996; IRNA 12 May 1996b).

12 May

As a result of the 7 March agreement, Hikmatyar's forces arrive in Kabul to assist Rabbani's forces in defending Kabul against the Taliban (IRNA 12 May 1996a; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 14 May 1996). Hizb forces are also stationed at the 16th army division garrison in Pol-i Charkhi, and at the Paghman, Qaragha, Bagh Daud, Goldavood, Khord Kabul and Logar fronts (ibid.; IRNA 12 May 1996a).

Mid-May

According to Radio Message of Freedom, travellers returning from Logar province claim to have witnessed the Taliban forcing Shi'is to perform their daily prayer in Sunni mosques and in Sunni style (18 May 1996).

20 May

IRNA reports that the Taliban have executed one of their own commanders, Mullah Abdur-Rahman, in Wardag province for "establishing contacts and cooperation with the Afghan government" (20 May 1996).

24 May

Rabbani and Hikmatyar sign a peace agreement, agree to organize elections and establish a "real Islamic government" (*Keesing's* May 1996a, 41094; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 26 May 1996), and on 27 May sign a six-point agreement to form an interim government (IRNA 27 May 1996). To counter this alliance the Taliban call an opposition meeting in Kandahar that is attended by Yunus Khalis (Hizb), Muhammad Nabi (Harakat), and Pir Sayyid Ahmad Gailani of Mahaz-i (ibid. 30 May 1996; AFP 6 June 1996). Dustam and Mujaddadi (Jabha) send representatives (UPI 7 June 1996). On 7 June 1996 the SCC suspends Hikmatyar's membership because of his alliance with Rabbani (AFP 7 June 1996).

UN special peace envoy Mahmoud Mistiri, appointed in March 1994, resigns on medical grounds, citing exhaustion, and is replaced by German Norbert Holl (*Keesing's* May 1996b, 41094; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 24 May 1996).

30 May

Approximately 2,000 Afghans rally in front of the Kabul UN office, and issue a resolution to UN secretary-general Bhutros Bhutros-Ghali requesting UN and international participation in mine-clearing operations in Afghanistan, as well as aid for mine victims (Radio Afghanistan 30 May 1996; AFP 30 May 1996).

June

Dustam creates Balkh Airline (also Balkh Airways Company or Balkh Air) in Balkh province to compete with Afghanistan's official airline, Ariana Afghan (IRNA 11 June 1996; Radio Message of Freedom 22 June 1996; *Crescent International* 16-30 June 1996, 2). Balkh Airline will transport passengers and cargo between Mazar-i Sharif and Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia (ibid.; IRNA 11 June 1996). The Pakistani government issues the airline a permit to land at Peshawar airport. Flights are expected to begin 25 June (Radio Message of Freedom 22 June 1996).

24 June

Rasool Pahalwan, the second most powerful northern warlord after Dustam, is killed in an ambush near his Mazar-i Sharif base in the Shor desert (AFP 25 June 1996; Radio Afghanistan 25 June 1996).

26 June

In Kabul, Hikmatyar is sworn in as prime minister in Rabbani's government. The Taliban show their disapproval of Hikmatyar's betrayal by bombing Kabul the following day, killing 50 to 60 people and wounding 130 to 150 (Reuters 27 June 1996; *Keesing's* June 1996, 41149).

3 July

President Rabbani names a ten-member cabinet: Hikmatyar's party gets Defence (Wahidullah Sabawoon) and Finance (Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal); Rabbani's Jamiat gets Interior (Muhammad Younus Qanuni) and Foreign Affairs (Abdurrahim Ghafourzai); the Ittihad-e Islami is given Education (Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai) and Information and Culture (Qiyamuddin Kashaf or Qiyamuddin Ershad); Harakat retains Planning (Sayed Muhammad Ali Javid) and Labour and Social Welfare (Sayed Hossein Anvari); and Said Hussein Alami Balkhi of the Hizb-e Wahdat (Akbari)

retains Commerce. Twelve seats are kept vacant for other Afghan factions (Reuters 3 July 1996; Radio Afghanistan 3 July 1996; AFP 4 July 1996).

Mid-July

Prime Minister Hikmatyar closes down Kabul's five or six remaining cinemas and bans broadcast music and television as being un-Islamic (*Index on Censorship* Sept.-Oct. 1996, 80; AFP 22 July 1996; *The Washington Post* 15 Sept. 1996). Some sources interpret Hikmatyar's campaign as an attempt to appear more Islamic than the Taliban (ibid.; *Index on Censorship* Sept.-Oct. 1996, 80). Although Hikmatyar has not imposed Taliban-type work and educational restrictions, he has ordered women to dress modestly (AFP 22 July 1996; *The Washington Post* 15 Sept. 1996), and has moved to "oust communists from government military and intelligence agencies" (ibid.).

A new alliance called the Islamic National Front for Peace in Afghanistan (INFPA) is formed, consisting of Gailani's Mahaz, Dustam's Junbish, Mujaddadi's Jabha, Khalili's Wahdat and Sadiq Moddabir's Harakat-e Islami (AFP 18 July 1996; Radio Pakistan Network 18 July 1996). The INFPA will work toward a "transfer of power to a broad-based interim government" (ibid.; AFP 18 July 1996).

Early August

Severe fighting between Taliban forces and the opposition occurs in the provinces of Paktia, Paktika, Nimroz and Ghor (IRNA 11 Aug. 1996; Radio Afghanistan 5 Aug. 1996). Pro-government Radio Afghanistan reports that the Taliban are forcibly recruiting young people and levying heavy taxes in areas under their control (ibid.; ibid. 12 Aug. 1996).

8 August

Government forces capture Ghor's capital, Chaghcharan, but promptly lose it again (IRNA 11 Aug. 1996). After the Taliban arrest 70 people in Chaghcharan for cooperating with government forces, women demonstrate, demanding the release of their relatives (Radio Afghanistan 12 Aug. 1996). Taliban forces respond by firing into the crowd, wounding five women (ibid.).

13 August

Prime Minister Hikmatyar's government and Dustam conclude a formal cease-fire agreement that leads to the 29 August reopening of the Salang Highway from Kabul to the north, which had been closed for three years (*Keesing's* Aug. 1996b, 41230; *The Washington Post* 15 Sept. 1996).

28 August

The four eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar and Nuristan reportedly declare their neutrality in the ongoing war between the Taliban and Rabbani's government forces (AFP 28 Aug. 1996).

4 September

Led by the Afghan Women's Islamic Movement (AWIM) (also Afghan Women's Islamic Renaissance, or AWIR), approximately 200 Afghan women march through Kabul streets to protest Taliban restrictions on women, and submit a letter to UN secretary-general Bhutros Bhutros-Ghali (AFP 4 Sept. 1996; Reuters 4 Sept. 1996).

11 September

Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province and a key city linking Kabul to Peshawar, falls to the Taliban[9] (AFP 16 Sept. 1996; *MEI* 4 Oct. 1996, 13; AP 11 Sept. 1996). This victory gives the Taliban control of the major eastern land route between Pakistan and Kabul (ibid.; AFP 16 Sept. 1996). According to eyewitnesses, thousands of residents, the majority supporters or relatives of the previous Jalalabad governor Haji Abdul Qadir fearing retribution from the Taliban, flee toward the Pakistan border (ibid. 12 Sept. 1996). UN organizations, including the World Food Program, UNICEF, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan, temporarily close their Jalalabad offices (ibid.). Government forces bomb the city on 12 September (ibid. 16 Sept. 1996; Reuters 20 Sept. 1996; DPA 12 Sept. 1996), 15 September (ibid. 15 Sept. 1996a;

AFP 16 Sept. 1996) and 20 September (Reuters 20 Sept. 1996; AFP 20 Sept. 1996).

Now in control of approximately two thirds of the country (*The Washington Post* 15 Sept. 1996; AP 11 Sept. 1996), the Taliban advance on Sarobi (Reuters 13 Sept. 1996; *The Herald* Oct. 1996a, 69), which is located 75 km east of Kabul and controls access to Bagram airport, the government's only functioning airport (ibid.; AP 11 Sept. 1996; AFP 16 Sept. 1996). Hikmatyar and Rabbani reinforce Sarobi's defences in preparation for an expected attack (see 25 September 1996 entry) (ibid.; Reuters 13 Sept. 1996).

The Rabbani-Hikmatyar government sends emissaries to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to seek Dustam's military assistance against the Taliban (AFP 16 Sept. 1996).

12 September

The Taliban capture Mehtarlam, capital of Laghman province, (AFP 20 Sept. 1996; Reuters 13 Sept. 1996) and are in control of the entire province by either 13 or 20 September (ibid.; ibid. 20 Sept. 1996; AFP 20 Sept. 1996).

15 September

An Iranian interior ministry official, Husseini Pur, appeals to thousands of Afghan refugees to repatriate or face legal consequences. He states that residence permits will not be extended (DPA 15 Sept. 1996b). Beginning 1 October approximately 250,000 asylum-seekers are expected to leave Iran via Turkmenistan for northern Afghanistan. The operation will be supervised by Iran, Turkmenistan and the UNHCR (also see entries for 12 March 1995, 22 June 1995 and 13 March 1996) (ibid.).

22 September

The Taliban claim to have captured their 19th province, Kunar, from Jamiat commander Hazrat Ali (DPA 22 Sept. 1996; Reuters 29 Sept. 1996).

25 September

The Taliban capture the strategic town of Sarobi from government troops (Xinhua 25 Sept. 1996: *The Herald* Oct. 1996a, 69; *Keesing's* Sept. 1996, 41268). Approximately 50 people are killed and large quantities of arms captured from fleeing government soldiers (Xinhua 25 Sept. 1996).

26 September

Defying a UN Security Council appeal for an immediate cease-fire, the Taliban attack Kabul from the southeast and southwest (*Keesing's* Sept. 1996, 41268; Reuters 26 Sept. 1996). Fearing an imminent take-over, hundreds of citizens reportedly flee for Mazar-i Sharif in the north (ibid.). Rabbani, Hikmatyar, Ahmad Shah Mas'ud and his forces withdraw from the capital and are declared "national criminals" by the Taliban for not accepting a Taliban amnesty (ibid. 27 Sept. 1996). Mas'ud and Rabbani's forces retreat northward to Mas'ud's base at Jabal Saraj (*The Herald* Oct. 1996a, 66; *Asiaweek* 11 Oct. 1996, 20; *Keesing's* Sept. 1996, 41268).

27 September

Kabul falls to the Taliban and thousands flee as the new rulers proclaim Shari'a law throughout Afghanistan (AFP 30 Sept. 1996b; *The Herald* Oct. 1996a, 66; *MEI* 4 Oct. 1996, 13). Muhammad Umar appoints his deputy, Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, to head a six-man national ruling council (ibid.; *India Abroad* 29 Nov. 1996c, 12; Reuters 27 Sept. 1996). One Taliban commander reportedly states that all government soldiers and officers who surrender will be amnestied (ibid.), while in Kandahar, Muhammad Umar declares an amnesty for "all the former government's supporters" (*The Herald* Oct. 1996a, 66).

Despite being under UN protection, former president Najibullah and his brother, Shahpur Ahmadzai, are executed by the Taliban (ibid.; Reuters 27 Sept. 1996; *MEI* 4 Oct. 1996, 13).

28 September

The Taliban decree that women must wear the burqa, a garment that completely envelops the body, when outside the home; those deemed not to meet the dress code are sometimes beaten by the Taliban (AP 30 Oct. 1996; Reuters 4 Oct. 1996; *Index on Censorship* Nov.-Dec. 1996, 166). The Taliban also decree that the sexes must be segregated outside the home, and prohibit women from working[10] and girls from attending school (ibid.; AFP 30 Sept. 1996b; *The Washington Post* 7 Oct. 1996). The UNHCR ceases operations after losing half its staff because of the Taliban restrictions on women, Save the Children halts its land mine awareness program, and on 29 September Oxfam's Kabul office suspends operations indefinitely (UPI 13 Oct. 1996; *The Washington Post* 7 Oct. 1996; AFP 26 Oct. 1996). Films, music, television, cassette recorders and video players are also banned (*Keesing's* Sept. 1996, 41268; *Index on Censorship* Nov.-Dec. 1996, 166; *The Herald* Nov. 1996a, 67).

29 September

Civil servants and military personnel are given six weeks to grow beards or face punishment (AFP 30 Sept. 1996b; *The Economist* 5-11 Oct. 1996, 22; Reuters 30 Sept. 1996b). Reports indicate that if the beard is not of sufficient length or if an individual shaves his beard, he faces beating, dismissal from employment or being forced to shave his entire head (*The Frontier Post* 8 Oct. 1996; *The Sunday Gazette Mail* 6 Oct. 1996; Reuters 9 Dec. 1996a; *The Toronto Star* 14 Dec. 1996). Muhammad Umar reportedly suspends all ambassadors to foreign countries (Reuters 30 Sept. 1996b; ibid. 3 Oct. 1996a).

30 September

The Taliban announce that all women who have lost their jobs because of the Taliban decree against women working will continue to be paid[11], although for how long is not clear (Reuters 30 Sept. 1996b; AP 30 Oct. 1996).

In the southwest Kabul district of Dashti Barchi, the Hazaras appear to enjoy "semi-independence" from Taliban rule (AFP 30 Sept. 1996a). The Hazara districts of Karte Seh and Kotai Sangi experienced large population losses because of previous rounds of factional fighting (ibid.).

Kapisa province and its capital, Mahmud-i-Raqi, are captured by the Taliban, who pursue Rabbani's forces northward and capture the towns of Charikar and Jabal Saraj (Reuters 30 Sept. 1996a; VOA 30 Sept. 1996). While Mas'ud and his men retreat to the Panjshir Valley, the Taliban advance is stopped by Dustam's forces (ibid.; Reuters 30 Sept. 1996a).

Early October

Schools and colleges remain closed one week after Kabul falls, as 70 per cent of all teachers are women. Many boys' schools also remain closed because there are not enough male teachers to provide instruction (Reuters 3 Oct. 1996b; AP 30 Oct. 1996; *The Washington Post* 7 Oct. 1996). Although female doctors and nurses are permitted to work in hospitals that care only for female patients, many have not returned to the workplace for fear of harassment (ibid.; Reuters 3 Oct. 1996b). Approximately 50 per cent of civil servants and 40 per cent of physicians are women (*The Washington Post* 7 Oct. 1996), and a significant number are also employed by private aid groups and UN organizations (ibid.; AP 30 Oct. 1996).

The Taliban impose a 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew in Kabul (Reuters 14 Oct. 1996b; *The Herald* Nov. 1996a, 67; VOA 9 Oct. 1996). On 7 October a foreign aid worker with the International Committee for the Red Cross is arrested for breaking the curfew, allegedly beaten and then released the following morning (ibid.).

Ariana Airlines resumes domestic flights from Kabul to Herat and Kandahar for the first time in over a year (AFP 13 Oct. 1996). Following the Taliban takeover of Kabul, Ariana had halted its one remaining international flight to New Delhi (ibid.).

3 October

According to aid workers and Kabul residents, anyone with connections to the former government, either real or suspected, is being "targeted" (VOA 9 Oct. 1996) or "looked for" (Reuters 4 Oct. 1996; *The Bangladesh Observer* 12 Oct. 1996, 4), but Kabul's Taliban leaders deny the charges (Reuters 3 Oct. 1996a). AI charges the Taliban with detaining up to 1,000 people in house-to-house searches in the days following the capture of Kabul (*The Bangladesh*

Observer 12 Oct. 1996, 4; Reuters 3 Oct. 1996a). The ministry of information and culture denies the charge, stating that "there have been no arrests for political crimes," only for looting, for which 70 to 80 individuals will be tried under Sharia law (ibid.; *Le Monde* 12 Oct. 1996). Two sources report that the Taliban are targeting members of the Panjshiri minority in Kabul (*The Herald* Nov. 1996a, 68; *The Bangladesh Observer* 12 Oct. 1996, 4).

5 October

The Taliban attack Mas'ud's forces at the Salang Pass in the Panjshir Valley, suffering heavy losses in repeated offensives (Reuters 5 Oct. 1996; ibid. 11 Oct. 1996; *The Daily Telegraph* 14 Oct. 1996). On 12 October Mas'ud's forces retake Jabal Saraj, and the following day recapture Charikar. His forces also pound Taliban-controlled Bagram air base (ibid.; Reuters 11 Oct. 1996; ibid. 14 Oct. 1996a). Within a week Mas'ud has forced the Taliban back almost to the capital (ibid.).

7 October

UN secretary-general Bhutros Bhutros-Ghali states that Taliban restrictions on women violate the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both signed and ratified by Afghanistan, and warns that continuing these practices may affect the UN's ability to continue its aid and reconstruction programmes (DPA 7 Oct. 1996).

10 October

Dustam, Mas'ud and Wahdat leader Karim Khalili set up an Afghan Defence Council to counter the Taliban (*Le Monde Monde* 12 Oct. 1996; *Libération* 15 Oct. 1996, 8). On 22 October Hikmatyar's Hizb, Mohseni's Harakat-i Islami and Gailani's Mahaz also join the defence council (Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran 22 Oct. 1996).

Mid-October

Kabul residents claim the Taliban are press-ganging young men arrested on suspicion of being "former government sympathizers" into serving at the front (*The Daily Telegraph* 14 Oct. 1996). Other Kabul residents report that the Taliban are conscripting young males at mosques and bazaars (*Le Monde* 12 Oct. 1996; *The Washington Post* 15 Oct. 1996). The reports are denied by the Taliban (ibid.).

15 October

Pakistan offers to broker peace talks between the warring factions and sends a high-level delegation, led by Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar, to meet with Dustam and Kabul's Taliban leaders (Reuters 15 Oct. 1996b; *The Herald* Nov. 1996b, 75). This marks the first known high-level contact between the Taliban and Dustam (*The Washington Post* 17 Oct. 1996; Reuters 17 Oct. 1996a), leading observers to believe that Dustam's commitment to the Afghan Defence Council is not total (Reuters 17 Oct. 1996b).

Left ungarrisoned after falling to Mas'ud's forces two days earlier, the market town of Qara Bagh, 45 km north of Kabul, is retaken without a fight by the Taliban (Reuters 15 Oct. 1996a). On 19 October Qara Bagh is recaptured by the joint Mas'ud-Dustam force (ibid. 19 Oct. 1996).

16 October

In Kabul the Taliban reportedly detain for a day and beat television journalist and war correspondent Natalio Aides, as well as cameraman Walter Moor, both Argentine nationals (Reuters 17 Oct. 1996c).

18 October

A joint Mas'ud-Dustam attack from the north and northeast recaptures the strategic Bagram air base from the Taliban, permitting Mas'ud's forces to launch air strikes against the Taliban (Reuters 18 Oct. 1996; *The Washington Post* 21 Oct. 1996; *The Herald* Nov. 1996b, 75). Mas'ud issues an ultimatum, demanding the Taliban leave Kabul or "face destruction" (VOA 23 Oct. 1996b; Reuters 18 Oct. 1996).

20 October

Mas'ud's forces take the village of Hussein Kot, 20 km from Kabul, and continue their advance on the capital, firing rockets on Kabul airport (Reuters 20 Oct. 1996a). Dustam's forces, advancing toward Kabul along a parallel road, are 30 km from the capital (ibid.).

Save the Children UK, US and Sweden threaten to stop their aid programs because of the Taliban restrictions on women's employment and education (Reuters 20 Oct. 1996b). The warning is repeated on 26 October, and Save the Children also calls on other international aid organizations to suspend all educational and non-emergency aid programs in areas where women are discriminated against in work or school (AFP 26 Oct. 1996).

21 October

Dustam proposes a cease-fire to the Taliban, via Pakistani interior minister Naseerullah Babar, to begin at noon the following day (*The Washington Post* 21 Oct. 1996; Xinhua 21 Oct. 1996). A Mas'ud spokesman accepts the cease-fire on condition that Kabul be demilitarized, but the Taliban insist on an immediate POW exchange and demand that the truce be monitored by a 12-member commission of six Taliban and six opposition group members (ibid.; Reuters 22 Oct. 1996). Negotiations reportedly collapse without agreement (ibid.).

21-30 October

After two weeks of steady advances, anti-Taliban alliance forces stall 15 km from Kabul (*The Economist* 2-8 Nov. 1996, 35; *The Washington Post* 25 Oct. 1996; *The Times* 26 Oct. 1996). The joint forces form two fronts on the north and northeast outskirts of Kabul in preparation for a two-pronged "final strike" against the Taliban; Mas'ud's troops are massed at the town of Hussein Kot and a coalition of troops loyal to Dustam and Mas'ud are assembled in the town of Wadkey (ibid.; *The Washington Post* 25 Oct. 1996).

22 October

In an act of "collective punishment," Taliban fighters set fire to the hamlet of Sarchesma (Sar Cheshma), located 8 km north of Kabul (*The Guardian Weekly* 3 Nov. 1996, 3; AI 18 Nov. 1996b, 9-10; *The Ottawa Citizen* 27 Oct. 1996). Mas'ud's forces had briefly occupied the town a day earlier, retreating after firing at Taliban positions (ibid.; *The Guardian Weekly* 3 Nov. 1996, 3). Only 4 of 120 homes remain unscathed (ibid.; *The Ottawa Citizen* 27 Oct. 1996; AI 18 Nov. 1996b, 9-10).

23 October

Approximately 400 women in Mazar-i Sharif publicly defy the Taliban by flaunting make-up, wearing high heels and throwing off the burqa (VOA 23 Oct. 1996a; Reuters 23 Oct. 1996; *The Times* 24 Oct. 1996). Women in Mazar-i Sharif have reportedly flourished under Dustam's liberal Islamic regime (ibid.; *The Herald* Oct. 1996b, 70).

25 October

The Taliban claim to have captured Badghis province and entered Farayab in their first "open" clash with Dustam's forces (AFP 25 Oct. 1996; VOA 27 Oct. 1996), but Dustam denies these claims (AFP 27 Oct. 1996).

27-28 October

The anti-Taliban alliance attacks Kabul, but fails to break through the Taliban lines (VOA 28 Oct. 1996; Reuters 28 Oct. 1996). Anti-Taliban forces mount another attack on 31 October, again with little success (ibid. 31 Oct. 1996).

29 October

Iranian foreign minister Akbar Ali Velayati hosts the first regional conference on Afghanistan in Tehran. The two-day conference, which is attended by all regional countries except Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan (*The Herald* Nov. 1996b, 76; Reuters 29 Oct. 1996; IPS 21 Nov. 1996), has been organized to find a solution to the civil war in Afghanistan (ibid.). Conference participants reportedly call for a cease-fire and immediate negotiations between the two sides (*The Economist* 2-8 Nov. 1996, 35). One source maintains that the conference "failed to bring about any radical development" (*The Herald* Dec. 1996, 63).

30 October

Anti-Taliban opposition forces led by Hazrat Ali reportedly capture Dar-ye Nur, capital of Nangarhar province, located 30 km north of Jalalabad (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network 30 Oct. 1996; AFP 4 Nov. 1996a; IRIB 30 Oct. 1996). Reports indicate that the Taliban retake Dar-ye Nur on 2 or 3 November 1996 (Radio Pakistan Network 3 Nov. 1996; AFP 4 Nov. 1996a; ibid. 2 Nov. 1996).

30 October-3 November

Heavy fighting between Taliban and alliance forces is reported in Badghis province (Radio Pakistan Network 3 Nov. 1996; AFP 3 Nov. 1996; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network 31 Oct. 1996), particulary in the areas of Band-e Sabzak, Qades and Qal'e-e Naw, Bala Morghab and Bala Bokan (ibid.; ibid. 30 Oct. 1996; IRIB 30 Oct. 1996; AFP 3 Nov. 1996). Both sides claim victory (VOA 4 Nov. 1996b; Reuters 23 Nov. 1996), but an AFP report states that neither side has scored any "significant gains," and indicates that the Taliban still control Qal'e-e Naw, Badghis' capital (3 Nov. 1996). The anti-Taliban forces are led by Dustam and former Herat governor Isma'il Khan; Khan had soldiers flown in from Iran to support the offensive (ibid.; ibid. 4 Nov. 1996b; *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* 1 Nov. 1996; *Libération* 1 Nov. 1996). Several reports indicate that Dustam and Khan are preparing to attack the city of Herat (IRNA 1 Nov. 1996; AFP 3 Nov. 1996; ibid. 4 Nov. 1996b; VOA 1 Nov. 1996).

1 November

A Taliban official announces that girls will be allowed to attend school in Kabul after the fighting around the city ceases (AP 1 Nov. 1996; also see *The Nation* 30 Oct. 1996). The same official states that women may also be permitted to work again (AP 1 Nov. 1996).

4 November

Dustam calls for peace talks and states that he will ask Pakistan to pressure the Taliban to accept the proposal (AP 4 Nov. 1996a; VOA 4 Nov. 1996a; Reuters 4 Nov. 1996a). Taliban officials reject Dustam's offer, restating that a cease-fire and prisoner exchange are prerequisites to such talks (ibid.; VOA 4 Nov. 1996a).

Anti-Taliban alliance jets bomb Herat's airport (AFP 4 Nov. 1996b; AP 4 Nov. 1996b; VOA 4 Nov. 1996b). The attack on Herat is reportedly the first since the Taliban captured the city in September 1995 (see 5 September 1995 entry) (ibid.; UPI 4 Nov. 1996).

Anti-Taliban forces take control of Mangoi district in Konar province (AFP 4 Nov. 1996a; Reuters 4 Nov. 1996b). The Taliban send in reinforcements in an effort to recapture the district (ibid.; UPI 4 Nov. 1996).

9-12 November

Dustam's aircraft continue to bomb Taliban positions in Kabul, primarily the airport (ITAR-TASS 12 Nov. 1996; ibid. 10 Nov. 1996; Reuters 11 Nov. 1996a; ibid. 10 Nov. 1996), and several hundred civilians flee areas north of Kabul because of heavy fighting (*Current History* Jan. 1997, 45). Despite the fighting, the front line north of Kabul remains largely unchanged (Reuters 10 Nov. 1996; ibid. 11 Nov. 1996a; ITAR-TASS 10 Nov. 1996; *Libération* 14 Nov. 1996).

11-16 November

Fleeing intense fighting in Badghis province, as many as 50,000 refugees arrive in Herat and Qal'e-e-Naw (UNHCR 11 Nov. 1996; Reuters 15 Nov. 1996; ibid. 11 Nov. 1996b; AP 17 Nov. 1996). Most are from the Morghab region of Badghis and "virtually all" are ethnic Pashtuns, indicating to the UNHCR and other aid organizations that the "displacement [of people] is taking place along ethnic lines" (UNHCR 15 Nov. 1996; also see Reuters 15 Nov. 1996; AP 17 Nov. 1996). In late November approximately 18,000 ethnic Pashtuns flee to the Turkmenistan border after forces loyal to Dustam capture the Bala Morghab region of Badghis province (AFP 27 Nov. 1996b).

17 November

The Taliban call on the UN to recognize them as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, and to transfer

Afghanistan's seat in the UN to a Taliban representative (AFP 17 Nov. 1996; Radio Afghanistan 18 Nov. 1996).

18 November

A one-day UN-sponsored conference on Afghanistan is held in New York (IRNA 18 Nov. 1996; IPS 21 Nov. 1996; *India Abroad* 29 Nov. 1996b, 4; *Iran News* 20 Nov. 1996). The closed-door conference is attended by representatives of 19 countries and groups, including all five Security Council members and representatives from Pakistan, Iran, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United States and the Central Asian Republics (IPS 21 Nov. 1996; *The Nation* 8 Nov. 1996; *India Abroad* 29 Nov. 1996b, 4). Representatives of the warring parties in Afghanistan are not present (ibid.; IPS 21 Nov. 1996). Afterward UN secretary-general Bhutros Bhutros-Ghali states that the conference succeeded in bringing international attention to the situation in Afghanistan (*India Abroad* 29 Nov. 1996b, 4). Conference attendees are almost unanimous that an immediate cease-fire must be negotiated and Kabul demilitarized (ibid.; *Iran News* 20 Nov. 1996; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 20 Nov. 1996).

Amnesty International publishes a "major" report entitled *Afghanistan: Grave Abuses by the Taleban in the Name of Religion* (AI 18 Nov. 1996a; DPA 18 Nov. 1996; also see Radio Afghanistan 20 Nov. 1996). The report documents numerous human rights violations committed by the Taliban, including indiscriminate and arbitrary killings, arbitrary detentions, restrictions on women and the beating and ill-treatment of women, children and prisoners (DPA 18 Nov. 1996; AI 18 Nov. 1996a). Taliban-controlled Radio Afghanistan, quoting a foreign ministry spokesperson, describes the report as "false and lacking truth," and urges Amnesty International "to refrain from publishing such incorrect and false information" (20 Nov. 1996).

20 November

Its staff subject to increasing intimidation from the authorities, the UNHCR halts most of its activities in Kabul (Reuters 20 Nov. 1996; *Libération* 21 Nov. 1996; Radio Afghanistan 23 Nov. 1996). The UNHCR has become increasingly concerned about the safety of its employees after the recent arrests of four Kabul staff members (*Libération* 21 Nov. 1996; Reuters 20 Nov. 1996), and after the Taliban accuse UNHCR staff of "passing military information to the opposition" (ibid. 24 Nov. 1996b; Radio Voice of Shari'ah 21 Nov. 1996). On 11 December the UNHCR announces that its four employees have been released and its Kabul office will reopen, and that the Taliban have promised such incidents will not reoccur (UNHCR 12 Dec. 1996; VOA 11 Dec. 1996; *The New York Times* 12 Dec. 1996, 8). However, a Taliban official dismisses claims that UNHCR employees are safe from arrest, stating that the Taliban will not compromise Afghan national interests (AP 16 Dec. 1996).

23-24 November

The Taliban claim to have captured the districts of Mir Bachakot and Guldara, north of Kabul, in an overnight offensive (Reuters 24 Nov. 1996a; AP 24 Nov. 1996; AFP 24 Nov. 1996; see also *India Abroad* 29 Nov. 1996a, 12), marking the first Taliban advance against opposition forces since mid-October (AP 24 Nov. 1996; Reuters 24 Nov. 1996a).

26 November

The Taliban arrest 60 people in Jalalabad for "failing to pray in mosques regularly" (DPA 26 Nov. 1996). All male Jalalabad residents have been instructed to either attend services regularly or face 10-day jail sentences (ibid.).

Taliban forces capture the villages of Kalakan (Qaloqan) and Istalif (AFP 27 Nov. 1996a; ibid. 29 Nov. 1996; Reuters 30 Nov. 1996; Radio Afghanistan 27 Nov. 1996), moving the front line north about 15 km (AFP 30 Nov. 1996) to the city of Qarabagh (AFP 27 Nov. 1996a). Heavy fighting around the two villages continues into December (AP 6 Dec. 1996; AFP 4 Dec. 1996; Reuters 9 Dec. 1996b). AP, which describes the lines in this area in recent weeks as "fluid," reports that Istalif is recaptured by anti-Taliban forces on 6 December 1996 (6 Dec. 1996).

4 December

The Taliban decree that wearing a chador is not sufficient to observe Islamic hijab; all women must wear the full burqa, which completely covers the face and body (Radio Afghanistan 4 Dec. 1996; AFP 5 Dec. 1996). On 7 December the same Taliban department forbids women from working for foreign relief agencies (Radio Voice of Shari'ah 7 Dec. 1996; *The Toronto Star* 16 Dec. 1996)

9 December

AP reports that ethnic minorities have been targeted for arrest and beatings since the Taliban captured Kabul in late September 1996, and that random arrest of non-Pashtuns is increasing (9 Dec. 1996). "Residents and aid workers say the harassment is worsening," reports AP, and "ethnic overtones are becoming increasingly evident on both sides of the conflict, with civilians being targeted solely because of their ethnicity" (ibid.; also see AP 22 Nov. 1996). Kabul residents are reportedly unsure whether the attacks are intentional or the Taliban are simply unable to control their fighters (ibid. 9 Dec. 1996).

9-16 December

UN envoy Norbert Holl holds separate meetings with Mas'ud, Dustam and Taliban officials aimed at securing a cease-fire, demilitarizing Kabul and establishing a direct dialogue between the belligerents (VOA 9 Dec. 1996; *The Muslim* 10 Dec. 1996; Radio Pakistan Overseas Service 16 Dec. 1996; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 17 Dec. 1996). Afterward Holl reports that the factions have agreed to establish a six-member bilateral commission, and maintains that he has "laid the ground for direct talks between the warring factions" (ibid.). Later reports indicate that some Taliban officials consider the UN envoy's mission to have been "futile" (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network 25 Dec. 1996; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 24 Dec. 1996), but one report states that the Taliban have signed a document agreeing to a cease-fire and the demilitarization of Kabul (ibid. 25 Dec. 1996). Nevertheless, some Taliban officials deny that such a document has been signed (ibid.).

18 December

The Taliban conduct their first public execution in Kabul, allowing a man convicted of murdering a woman and her three children to be shot at close range by the woman's husband (Reuters 18 Dec. 1996; AFP 18 Dec. 1996). Another man convicted of murder is executed in the city of Herat on 27 December, also shot at close range by a male family member of one of the victims (Reuters 27 Dec. 1996).

21-22 December

Two days of anti-Taliban demonstrations occur in the city of Herat (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network 23 Dec. 1996; ibid. 24 Dec. 1996; AFP 24 Dec. 1996). The demonstrations, which begin when a group of women demanding assistance from international organizations is "violently dispersed" by Taliban militiamen (ibid.), soon escalate into violent clashes that result in injuries and many arrests, including the arrests of 20 women (ibid.; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network 24 Dec. 1996; ibid. 23 Dec. 1994). The Taliban impose a curfew, deploying tanks and personnel carriers to maintain order (ibid.; ibid. 24 Dec. 1996).

24 December

At least 17 people are reported killed in Wardak province, in eastern Afghanistan, in clashes between rival Hizb-i Wahdat factions, one led by Karim Khalili and the other by Muhammad Akbari (DPA 24 Dec. 1996).

27-28 December

Taliban forces launch a massive offensive to retake the Bagram air base, held since October by the anti-Taliban alliance (AP 27 Dec. 1996; ibid. 28 Dec. 1996; *The Guardian Weekly* 5 Jan. 1997, 3; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 28 Dec. 1996; Reuters 29 Dec. 1996). The Taliban advance 10 to 20 km, coming within 5 km of the Bagram airbase (ibid.; AFP 29 Dec. 1996; *The Guardian Weekly* 5 Jan. 1997, 3; AP 28 Dec. 1996). All roads leading to the air base are now controlled by the Taliban (ibid.; *The Guardian Weekly* 5 Jan. 1997, 3). Sources indicate that Taliban forces also capture the towns of Qarabagh and Kalakan, as well as the mountain village of Istalif (see 26 November 1996 entry), formerly a Mas'ud stronghold (AP 28 Dec. 1996; ibid. 27 Dec. 1996; *The Guardian Weekly* 5 Jan. 1997, 3; Reuters 6 Jan. 1997; ibid. 29 Dec. 1996). Opposition forces retaliate, launching air strikes on Kabul and the city's airport (ibid.; ibid. 6 Jan. 1997; AFP 28 Dec. 1996; ibid. 29 Dec. 1996).

1997

2 January 1997

Taliban officials in Kabul warn that Muslims who fail to pray five times daily will face punishment (Reuters 2 Jan. 1997).

5 January

An air raid by Dustam's forces on the northwestern Kabul suburb of Wazir Akbar kills four people and injures at least 15 (Reuters 6 Jan. 1997; ibid. 5 Jan. 1997a; AP 5 Jan. 1997; AFP 5 Jan. 1997). Taliban officials warn that anti-Taliban alliance prisoners will be hanged if the attacks continue (Reuters 6 Jan. 1997).

The foreign ministers of Pakistan, Iran and Turkey meet in Istanbul to discuss ways to promote peace and "national reconciliation" in Afghanistan (*The Muslim* 23 Dec. 1996; IRNA 5 Jan. 1997; Reuters 5 Jan. 1997b; IRIB Television First Program Network 5 Jan. 1997). The ministers call for an immediate cease-fire and the establishment of a dialogue between the combatants (ibid.; Reuters 5 Jan. 1997b; IRNA 5 Jan. 1997).

9 January

Taliban officials announce that those who do not respect Ramadan will face 60 days in prison (AFP 9 Jan. 1997a). On 12 January in Kabul two men are charged with violating Ramadan religious obligations (ibid. 13 Jan. 1997c).

9-14 January

Fierce fighting between the Taliban and Dustam's forces resumes in Badghis province (AFP 9 Jan. 1997b; ibid. 14 Jan. 1997; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran 11 Jan. 1997b), particularly in Mangan Dan, Bala Morghab district and Jawalt (ibid. 10 Jan. 1997; ibid. 11 Jan. 1997a; AFP 14 Jan. 1997).

13-15 January

UN-brokered "working group" peace talks take place in Islamabad (VOA 13 Jan. 1997; ibid. 14 Jan. 1997; AP 16 Jan. 1997; AFP 13 Jan. 1997a; IRNA 13 Jan. 1997). The talks are attended by UN envoy Norbert Holl, three Taliban delegates and three delegates from the anti-Taliban alliance (ibid.; VOA 13 Jan. 1997; ibid. 14 Jan. 1997). Taliban officials maintain that they are willing to negotiate, but reject any proposal that includes the demilitarization of Kabul, one of the anti-Taliban alliance's key demands (AFP 13 Jan. 1997a; ibid. 13 Jan. 1997b; ibid. 15 Jan. 1997). A Taliban delegate states that the talks end without any "particular results" (ibid.). Further talks are planned for February (ibid.).

16 January

The Taliban recapture Bagram air base and Charikar, the capital of Parwan province, located some 50 km north of Kabul (AP 16 Jan. 1997; AFP 16 Jan. 1997a; Reuters 16 Jan. 1997; VOA 16 Jan. 1997). The Taliban order Charikar and other captured villages and towns evacuated (AP 17 Jan. 1997; ibid. 18 Jan. 1997), claiming they want to "clear the area of people" before advancing further (ibid.). Sources indicate the Taliban, who are performing house-to-house searches for arms in the newly captured villages and cities (Reuters 18 Jan. 1997; ibid. 20 Jan. 1997), want to eliminate the possibility of an uprising by the largely pro-Mas'ud Tajik population (AP 18 Jan. 1997; ibid. 17 Jan. 1997).

17-18 January

Several villages in the province of Kapisa, including the capital, Mahmoud Raki, fall to the Taliban as they continue to advance north (AFP 21 Jan. 1997; ibid. 18 Jan. 1997; Reuters 17 Jan. 1996; ibid. 20 Jan. 1997).

21 January

Thousands of people flee south toward Kabul to escape heavy fighting near Charikar (AFP 21 Jan. 1997; Reuters 21 Jan. 1997c; AP 21 Jan. 1997).

21-22 January

A two-day UN-sponsored forum on aid to Afghanistan is held in the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat (Reuters 21 Jan. 1997a; ibid. 21 Jan. 1997b; VOA 22 Jan. 1997b; Reuters 22 Jan. 1997). Donor countries and agencies agree to continue providing aid to Afghanistan (ibid.).

Alliance jets repeatedly bomb Kabul's airport and the town of Charikar, as heavy fighting between Taliban and anti-Taliban alliance forces resumes near Charikar (AFP 22 Jan. 1997a; ibid. 22 Jan. 1997b; AP 21 Jan. 1997; VOA 22 Jan. 1997b; AP 22 Jan. 1997b). The Taliban reportedly repulse the offensive (ibid.; AFP 22 Jan. 1997b).

22 January

A senior US government official announces that the US government does not recognize the Taliban administration in Kabul (VOA 22 Jan. 1997a; AP 22 Jan. 1997a).

23 January

The Taliban capture the towns of Jebul Siraj and Gulbahar, both former Mas'ud strongholds (AFP 23 Jan. 1997a; VOA 23 Jan. 1997b; AP 23 Jan. 1997; Reuters 23 Jan. 1997). Gulbahar, some 90 km north of Kabul, lies at the mouth of the Panjsher Valley, Mas'ud's "traditional bastion" (AFP 23 Jan. 1997a). Jebul Siraj is approximately 70 km north of Kabul, near the strategic Salang Pass, the gateway to Dustam-controlled northern Afghanistan (VOA 23 Jan. 1997b; AFP 23 Jan. 1997a; Reuters 23 Jan. 1997). Opposition forces blast hillsides near the Salang Pass in an attempt to block the Taliban advance (AFP 23 Jan. 1997b), and on 27 January blow up a section of the Salang Highway (AP 27 Jan. 1997c; AFP 27 Jan. 1997a).

The UNHCR reports that over the past 5 days more than 30,000 refugees have arrived in Kabul from front-line villages north of the city (VOA 23 Jan. 1997a; AP 23 Jan. 1997).

25-26 January

Two days of peace talks are held in Tehran. The talks, which are not attended by the Taliban, reportedly accomplish little (AFP 25 Jan. 1997; ibid. 26 Jan. 1997b; AP 25 Jan. 1997; Reuters 26 Jan. 1997). Participants in the talks, including Rabbani, Hikmatyar, Mohammad Akbari and a Dustam representative (AFP 24 Jan. 1997), call for a cease-fire, a prisoner exchange and the "creation of a safe and secure environment in Kabul" (Reuters 26 Jan. 1997b; AFP 26 Jan. 1997c).

26 January

Sources report that the Taliban are expelling thousands of ethnic Tajiks from the Gulbahar district in an attempt to "stave off any attempted uprising" (AFP 26 Jan. 1997d; Reuters 26 Jan. 1997a; AP 27 Jan. 1997b).

The Taliban claim to have captured the districts of Shinwari and Siagird in Ghorband valley (AFP 26 Jan. 1997a; VOA 26 Jan. 1997). Ghorband valley, 30 km west of Jebul Siraj, was controlled by Khalili's faction of the Hizb-i Wahdat (AFP 26 Jan. 1997a).

27 January

The Taliban propose a cease-fire and prisoner exchange, but rule out any possibility of power sharing (Reuters 27 Jan. 1997; VOA 27 Jan. 1997; AP 27 Jan. 1997a).

AFP reports that more than 90,000 displaced people have arrived in Kabul since early January (27 Jan. 1997b). On 1 February AP reports that 90,000 refugees arrived in Kabul in the last week of January (1 Feb. 1997). An official with Afghanistan's Red Cresent[12] states that the amount of aid provided by international agencies is insufficient to meet the need, and four refugees are dying from hunger and cold every day (ibid.). Some of the displaced are also heading to Jalalabad and Peshawar (CIC 4 Feb. 1997).

28 January

Anti-Taliban alliance jets bomb the Taliban-held town of Jebul Siraj, killing at least three civilians (AP 28 Jan. 1997; AFP 28 Jan. 1997a).

UN sources report that each day in Badghis province ten refugees die from hunger and cold (AFP 28 Jan. 1997b). Heavy fighting between Taliban and opposition forces has reportedly forced over 50,000 people to flee their homes in Badghis province in the past three months (ibid.).

A representative of the Canadian mission in Islamabad visits Kabul (CIC 4 Feb. 1997). The representative reports that in practise the Taliban have "loosened their restrictions on women's employment in Kabul and ... most other areas of Afghanistan as well, except for Herat" (ibid.). The UN has offered to help fund the reconstruction of 20 schools in Kabul, but only on condition that 10 schools be allocated to girls (ibid.). The Taliban reportedly refused to agree to this condition (ibid.).

29 January

The Taliban continue to expel residents of front-line villages as they advance north along the Salang Highway (AP 29 Jan. 1997; see also AFP 2 Feb. 1997b). Most of the evacuated villagers are ethnic Tajiks, raising fears that a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" is underway (AP 29 Jan. 1997). Refugees arriving in Kabul are staying in schools and bombed-out houses (ibid.; CIC 4 Feb. 1997). The Canadian mission's representative reports that international agencies are handling the refugee crisis in Kabul "as the Taliban authorities do not appear to have engaged in this area of civic management" (ibid.).

30-31 January

Taliban forces advance further into Ghorband valley, capturing the towns of Chardehi and Bakhan, approximately 130 km north of Kabul (AFP 31 Jan. 1997; ibid. 2 Feb. 1997b; AP 31 Jan. 1997).

2 February

Pro-Taliban Radio Voice of Shari'ah announces that Shi'ite residents of Tagab and Behsoud districts in Wardak province have risen up against Hizb-i Wahdat leader Karim Khalili (Reuters 2 Feb. 1997; AFP 2 Feb. 1997a). Both districts were previously loyal to Khalili (ibid.).

Unconfirmed reports indicate that the Taliban have captured the Hazara-inhabited districts of Shekali and Sorkhi Parsa in Parwan province from the Hizb-i Wahdat (Khalili) (Reuters 2 Feb. 1997; AFP 4 Feb. 1997). Both districts border Bamiyan province, Karim Khalili's traditional stronghold (ibid.). Khalili masses fresh troops in Bamiyan in anticipation of a further Taliban advance (AFP 2 Feb. 1997b; AP 2 Feb. 1997).

NOTES ON SELECTED SOURCES

IRNA

The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Iran's state-run news agency (DPA 27 Nov. 1995; Reuters 15 Dec. 1996; also see *Iran* 8 Dec. 1996), has its central office in Tehran (*Ettela'at* 8 Dec. 1996). Founded in 1931 as the Pars News Agency (NetIran n.d.), IRNA publishes reports in Farsi and English (DPA 27 Nov. 1995).

Radio Afghanistan

Based in Kabul, Radio Afghanistan was controlled by the Rabbani government in 1995 (BBC Summary 20 Nov. 1995). Since the fall of Kabul, however, Radio Afghanistan has been controlled by the Taliban (Reuters 17 Oct. 1996d; ibid. 26 Oct. 1996; Radio Afghanistan 6 Nov. 1996; ibid. 8 Nov. 1996), who have changed the name to Voice of Sharia (Reuters 26 Oct. 1996).

Radio Message of Freedom

This clandestine radio broadcast, controlled by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar and the Hizb-i Islami (Radio Message of

Freedom 12 June 1996; ibid. 5 Sept. 1996; see also *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1291), was run by Mohammad Nazir Beshart in early 1995 (Radio Message of Freedom 3 May 1995).

Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran

All broadcasting facilities in Iran are state-controlled (*Iran: A Country Study* 1989, 221; *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1156). Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran radio network has three channels—Radio Networks 1 and 2 and Radio Quran—and broadcasts in over 25 languages, both within Iran and internationally (*The Middle East and North Africa 1996* 1996, 476).

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The Xinhua News Agency. 31 January 1995. "100 Die in Afghan Kunduz Battle." (NEXIS)

The Xinhua News Agency. 20 January 1995. "Fighting Erupts Again in Kabul." (NEXIS)

ENDNOTES:

1. For detailed information on the Taliban, please consult Extended Response to Information Request AFG21226.E of 17 July 1995.

2. Please note that sources rarely agree on the exact number of provinces in Afghanistan.

3. Under the 7 March 1993 Islamabad peace accord, Rabbani, Hikmatyar, Mujaddidi and the Mujahidin leaders agreed to set up an 18-month interim government with Rabbani installed as president and Hikmatyar as prime minister (*The Far East and Australasia 1996* 1996, 58).

4. Another source states that the Wahdat had split in September 1994, when Muhammad Akbari left Mazari and rejoined Rabbani (ODR Feb. 1996, 15.2).

5. Herat province is the transit point for refugees leaving Iran for Afghanistan's northwestern provinces (AFP 5 Sept. 1995; USCR 1996, 110-11). Afghan refugees coming from Iran generally stop over at Herat's Gazarge transit camp for one week before moving on (UN 27 Feb. 1996, 16).

6. According to AFP, on 8 October 1995 the Taliban assure a U.N. official visiting Kandahar that "female education will receive due attention within the Islamic framework in areas under their control" (8 Oct. 1995; *Country Reports 1995* 1996, 1293).

7. Located approximately 150 km north of Kabul, Pul-i-Khumri is considered a "strategic access point" between the capital and the city of Mazar-i Sharif (AFP 3 Mar. 1996).

8. According to one source, the week-long meeting was set to begin on 21 March 1996, would involve 300 ulama' and would discuss how to end the civil war and set up an Islamic government in Kabul (*Periscope Daily Defense News Capsules* 19 Mar. 1996).

9. Until this attack on Jalalabad, Nangarhar province had been considered a "neutral haven" (DPA 12 Sept. 1996).

10. One source reports that the Taliban order female civil servants not to report to work (*Asiaweek* 11 Oct. 1996, 22).

11. Two sources indicate that only female civil servants will continue to be paid until they can "resume work under ... Islamic conditions" (*The Washington Post* 7 Oct. 1996; Reuters 3 Oct. 1996a).

12. The national Red Cresent societies are part of the International Red Cross and Red Cresent Movement (*Red Cross, Red Cresent* Jan.-Apr. 1994, 29).

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Last updated 1999-12-09

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